

On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.com

Website: www.arubatoday.com Thursday, March 5, 2009



**Price of a barrel
of petroleum
today:**

US\$ 45.38

INSIDE TODAY

WORLD NEWS

WARRANT ISSUED



Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir attends a graduation ceremony at an air force academy near Khartoum, Sudan, Wednesday, March 4, 2009. Sudan denounced an international tribunal that issued an arrest warrant against its president Wednesday on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, calling it a "white man's court" that aims to destabilize the country.

See INTERNATIONAL NEWS

SPORTS NEWS

MANNY RETURNS



In this Sept. 6, 2008, file photo Los Angeles Dodgers' Manny Ramirez hits a three-run home run in the fifth inning of a National League baseball game in Los Angeles.

See Sports Today

The International School collects gift items for the Women's Shelter



ORANJESTAD -- The Women's Shelter received more than 500 items, collected by the students of the International School of Aruba during last month. The items will benefit clients of the shelter, which is supported by a not-for-

profit local foundation named "Women in Difficulty."

Among items donated are toiletries such as soap bars, creams and shampoos, which will be used to make welcome baskets for the just-arrived clients of the

shelter.

The "toiletry drive" was organized as a community charity event, as part of the students' curriculum, as they were challenged to raise awareness in the student community.

In preparation for International Women's Day, celebrated throughout the world on March 8th the community is hereby reminded there is "no Excuse for Abuse," and that the community is obligated to support women in their quest for a better life, not just for them but also for their children.

Pictured here the proud class representatives with their collection. □

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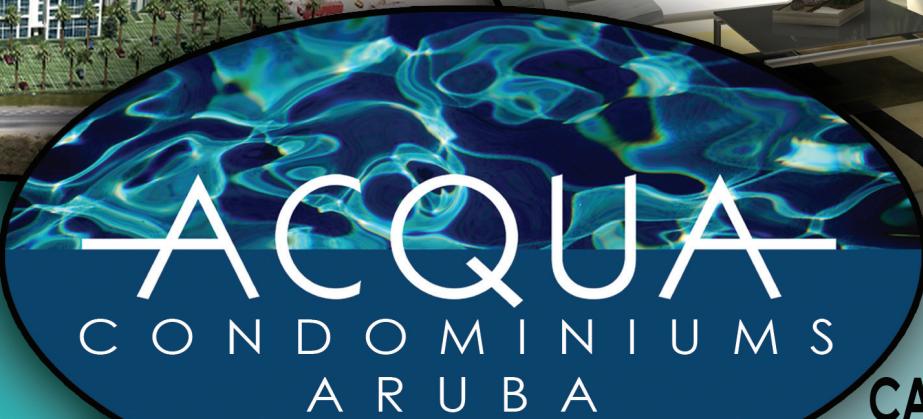
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Special Friends from Aruba honored at La Cabana Beach & Racquet Club



EAGLE BEACH - Recently at La Cabana Beach & Racquet Club, Aruba vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20 consecutive years. Special

friends of Aruba, enjoying ten or more annual vacations here, are given the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years are awarded the Ambassador of goodwill title. The recent honorings were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority



associate Ricardo Croes at La Cabana Beach & Racquet Club which they call their home away from home. Dennis Strange & Cheryl Facik, Irene Russo and Lynn Marie Russo were honored as a Distinguished visitor for the Island of Aruba after coming to the Island for 12 years. Pictured: Mr. Ricardo Croes together with honorees and also Ena from La Cabana Beach & Racquet Club.□



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Loyal visitors honored at the Divi Village Resort



ORANJESTAD - Recently at the Divi Village Resort, Aruba vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20 consecutive years. Special friends of Aruba, enjoying ten or more annual vacations here, are given the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years

are awarded the Ambassador of goodwill title. The recent honorings were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority associate Ricardo Croes at the Divi Village Resort which they call their home away from home. Jerry & Shirley Ballenger were honored as an Distinguished visitor for the Island of Aruba after coming to the Island for 11 years and also Gary & Cynthia Ruoff were



honored as an Ambassador of Goodwill after visiting Aruba for 21 years. Jerry & Shirley

Ballenger are celebrating their 45th Anniversary.

Pictured: Mr. Ricardo Croes

together with honorees and also Gloria & Gerrit Griffith from the Divi Village Resort □

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New board Aruba tennis federation ALTB



The new board of the Aruban tennis federation on the tennis court of the Marlboro Tennis Park.

ORANJESTAD—The Aruban tennis federation (ALTB) has chosen its new board recently. The board consists of Chairman Mieke Krohn, Treasurer Stella Harms, Secretary Monique Bouwer, 2nd treasurer Sandra Curtis, 2nd secretary Diederick Lee, marketing manager Alex Laclé and members Frank Hodgson, Franz Sydow and Natascha Davelaar. Several members who have joined the board this year are relatively new to the world of tennis on Aruba. "We are extremely pleased these

people want to contribute to the federation," says chairman Krohn. "A fresh new outlook can make a positive contribution to tennis on the island." This year the federation plans to develop and launch the ALTB website. Here, members and other interested parties can find information about training opportunities, local and international tournaments, rankings and much more. The website will also include information about possible tennis scholarships. □

ATA Holds First-Ever Roundtable Event for Travel Agents In New York City

ORANJESTAD - The Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA) held its first-ever roundtable event at Time Warner Center in New York City on Feb. 5, 2009. Hotel and tour partners from Aruba presented individual property updates and promotions to more than 50 top-qualified travel agents from agencies including American Express, Valerie Wilson, Liberty Travel, Pro Travel, Altour and others.

"New York is the largest North American source market for visitors to Aruba and we place significant value in our travel agent relationships here," said Geraldine Coutinho-Meyers, ATA's director of North America. "We wanted to create an event where our hotel partners can spend quality one-on-one time with agents and based on the success of this event, we are planning to host roundtable events in multiple top-source markets throughout 2009."

The Aruba partners represented at the roundtable agent dinner included: Amsterdam Manor Resort; The Aruban Resort & Casino; Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino; Bucuti Beach Resort; De Palm Tours; Divi Resorts; Divi Tamarind Aruba All Inclusive Resort; Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort & Casino; The Mill Resort; Occidental Grand Aruba Resort; Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa; Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino; The Westin Resort, Aruba; and Tierra del Sol Aruba Resort, Spa & Country Club.

The event also featured a presentation from the Aruba Tourism Authority on all of the new developments taking place in Aruba, including a total investment of \$500 million in refurbishments and tourism updates; the new brand campaign "Meet the 90,000 Friends of Aruba" which is currently running in the United States; and the upcoming launch of the new Aruba.com which will feature a new booking engine and a social networking section for Aruba's biggest fans. □

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The Excelsior Casino Winner's Circle



03/02/2009

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The beautiful Excelsior Casino will satisfy your taste for games of chance. One of Aruba's finest casinos, the Excelsior Casino features Las Vegas style gambling of all games of chance as well as a beautiful sports betting area and poker room. The Excelsior Casino is the



only casino in Aruba to offer 3-4-5 times odds on Craps and Double Deck Blackjack. Spanish 21 and Blackjack can be dealt out of a shoe at your request. And, most of all, the Excelsior Casino does not hit the soft 17.

The Excelsior Casino features the largest Poker Room with limits as low as \$2-\$4 to \$50-\$100 no limit. No need to carry coins to the cashier! The Excelsior Casino's state of the art slot machines are totally Ticket-In, Ticket-Out. □



03/03/2009



03/03/2009

Happy Hour La Vista, Baby!

IFA and Marriott Combine for the Best Yet



PALM BEACH - The International Friends of Aruba (www.ifaruba.com) were hosted at the newly re-opened La Vista Restaurant and Bar, located at the Aruba Marriott Hotel, for the organization's monthly happy hour. Vice President and General Manager Rick Zeolla welcomed IFA members to the fully renovated restaurant and bar, complete with chic décor, friendly and attentive wait staff and an Italian themed menu.

While Zeolla took interested members on a tour of the restaurant, others mingled in the bar, which is reminiscent of the finer South Beach hot spots. The Friends indulged in libations from La Vista's "mix-ologists," enjoying the special drink prices provided just for the occasion. The courteous and friendly staff served a never-ending flow of complementary new menu items, including pizza, calamari and shrimps.

IFA President Marty Relan, on behalf of the group, thanked the La Vista management and staff for "the best happy hour yet" and is already planning to return to the restaurant with the IFA Dinner Club for a complete dining experience.

The International Friends of Aruba highly recommend La Vista, Aruba Marriott Hotel, to the Aruban community with unanimous rave reviews of the food, service and ambience.

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Mike Eman:

Green from coast to coast

ORANJESTAD – During an interview with the leader of Aruba's People Party AVP, Mike Eman, with enthusiasm elaborated on how he and his party will "change" the yellow color into green. This all started last Sunday when symbolically the well known landmark Rio Grande building in the district of Noord was transformed from a faded yellow into a fresh green color.

According to Eman the biggest change in Aruba started in this district but will not end there. The change, as he calls it, will be from coast to coast. It's a fact, yellow will turn into green!

The results of the next election will not simply be

a political victory, but will be a joint feeling of the people who are longing for a change. It is obvious that the Aruban people really want "green" to participate in this change because they

have been neglected these last 4 years by the present government. □

Mike Eman together with Paul Croes, the originator of the Rio Grande project and soon-to-be candidate of the party



Aruba TODAY

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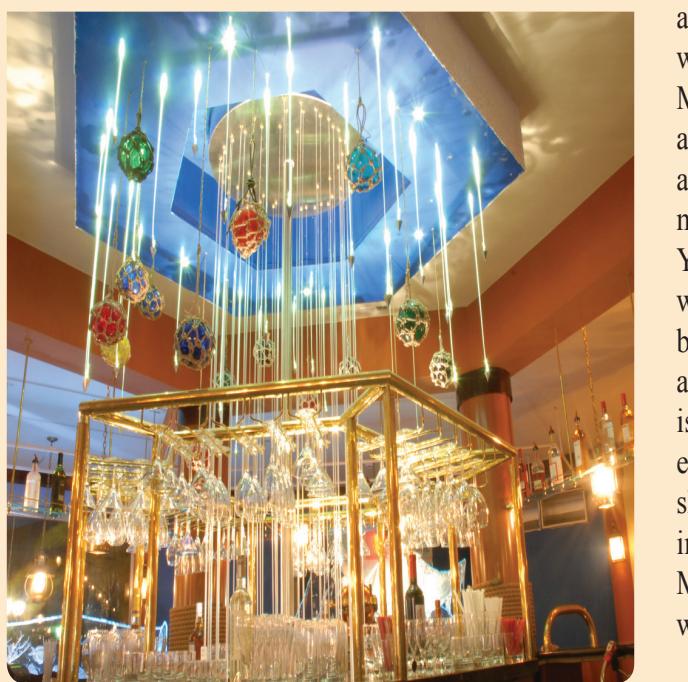
Located next to the Crystal Casino

Seafood as you've not had before

Moby Dick's brings dishes from the sea

PASEO HERENCIA - inside is studded with artwork, amazing glass carvings, and both floors are dominated by gigantic fountains, with water running from ceiling to floor along multicoloured lit fibre optic cables. The stairway is lined by an impressive painting which runs along the complete wall. The menu promises to be a true seafood lovers dream. Lobsters, fresh fish fillets, shrimps, Moby Dick's has everything on the menu. There is of course a land lubbers section for those who are so disposed. The wine list is impressive to say the least, and the cocktails are definitely worth a taste.

Moby Dick's is open for lunch as well. The chef has made a well rounded, extensive menu for you to choose from. You will find what you want, whatever your craving may be at that time. The staff is amongst the friendliest on the island, ever so attentive to your every whim. So long story short, for unbelievable seafood in unique surroundings, go to Moby Dick's. You'll have a whale of a time!



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ORANJESTAD - Why should seafood enthusiast and other diners alike go to Driftwood Restaurant? Well let's start by mentioning that their fish is caught daily by the owner himself and prepared by a local chef. "Just like mama makes it." The food is fresh, the staff is friendly, and the place is definitely buzzing. If you want to catch your own fresh fish and can't stay for a sit-down dinner, enjoy their Charter Fishing trip and have them prepare it for you. Trust me; it doesn't get any fresher than this: From pier to plate as their motto says.



Fried fish would be the common choice, but you can get your entrée broiled, grilled or baked. However you can indulge in the more guilty options for lobster, Alaskan king crab legs, grouper, shrimp, Black Angus tenderloin and so forth. Ease your

conscience and add a salad or go all out and try their delicious crab cakes, fish soup, garlic escargots, lobster crepe and coconut shrimps before your hearty entrée.



While seafood stars at Driftwood, fish-phobic diners will not go hungry. They have a staggeringly vast menu, which doesn't miss much of anything, from authentic Aruban seafood, lobster, Alaskan king crab legs to chicken, lamb or steaks.

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Driftwood restaurant has a long tradition of serving the best seafood and steaks for over 20 years!

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Restaurant information and reservation: open daily (closed on Tuesdays) from 5pm-10:30pm. Tel. 583-2515. Located at Klipstraat 12 in the heart of downtown Oranjestad, within driving distance from the resorts. □



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"Aruhiba" Aruba's homemade cigar



ORANJESTAD - Benjamin Petrochi has started the newest

export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called 'Aruhiba'. These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrochi has always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold cigars from outside, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of "Aruhiba" cigars in Aruba. The process took 5 years Petrochi's dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and



process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar case is specially designed for the cigars with the logo 'Aruhiba' and 'Made in Aruba'. Petrochi considers 'Aruhiba' a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars.

The company sells international cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba Corona with five cigars and get 1 free for \$35.00. Located at the Historic Dutch

Windmill from 9am to 8pm. Open on Sunday. And also at Tamarijn: open 9am - 5pm and Sunday from 9am to 1pm.

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Friends of Rob Knox pay their respects at the scene where he was stabbed and killed in Sidcup. A court has convicted Karl Bishop for the frenzied murder of Knox, a teenage actor who stars in the latest Harry Potter film.

(AFP/File/Ben Stansall)



Usher Backtracks on Chris Brown Diss

Gina Serpe

Los Angeles (E! Online) – A detailed, heartfelt apology has finally been issued in the Chris Brown-Rihanna incident. Just not from the person you may expect.

Usher is backtracking on an apparently egregious comment he made earlier this week about Brown, suggesting the "Run It" singer spend a little more time showing "a little bit of remorse" and a little less time jet-skiing around Miami Beach following his arrest for allegedly roughing up Rihanna.

The seemingly common-sense critique was made during a Monday recording of Jermaine Dupri's Living the Life YouTube series, a clip of which was hastily removed from the video site once word of its contents broke.

"The comments made during a recent recording session amongst friends were taken out of context and blown out of proportion," Usher said in a statement released today.

Bros before...well, Rihanna, apparently.

"I apologize on behalf of myself and my friends if anyone was offended. The intentions were not to pass judgment and we meant no

British man guilty of murdering Harry Potter actor

LONDON (Reuters) – A British man was found guilty on Wednesday of stabbing to death a teenage actor who played a role in the forthcoming Harry Potter film. Rob Knox, 18, died after being stabbed five times outside a bar near London in May 2007 as he tried to protect his younger brother Jamie, 17. Knox had a small part as Marcus Belby in the forthcoming "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince."

Karl Bishop, 22, was found guilty of his murder at London's Old Bailey criminal court.

The court heard Bishop had been involved in a dispute with Knox at the bar the previous week. The following week he returned but was refused entry and ended up in another confrontation with Knox and his friends.

He returned home and armed himself with two kitchen knives. During the altercation Bishop threatened that he "would stab anyone who came near him," prosecutor Brian Altman said.

The court heard that Bishop showed no signs of remorse. When told that Knox had died, he replied: "Yeah, sweet." □



harm. I respect and wish the best for all parties involved." Usher made the comments after viewing paparazzi shots of Brown taken during his reconciliation weekend with the "Disturbia" songbird. The duo was holed up in Sean "Diddy" Combs' Star Island mansion, and while Rihanna opted not to emerge from the property, Brown kept publicly busy by riding around on a Jet Ski and logging time in the recording studio. "I'm a little disappointed in this photo. After the other photo?" □

Mariska Hargitay Hospitalized Again



Zelnik, told E! News.

"She is undergoing routine tests and expects to be feeling better soon."

Production on the show is not expected to be affected while Hargitay recovers.

According to reports, the actress was working on the set of her NBC show all day yesterday

and waited until filming was complete before being taken to the hospital.

The 45-year-old was briefly sidelined in January after suffering pneumothorax, or a partially collapsed lung, while the show was on its holiday hiatus.

Production was temporarily postponed, and Hargitay bowed out of planned appearances at both the Golden Globes and the Screen Actors Guild Awards as a result.

She returned to the set after two weeks, though no cause was ever given for the condition. □

Gina Serpe

Los Angeles (E! Online) – Mariska Hargitay has gone from the SVU to the ER.

Weeks after the Law & Order: Special Victims Unit star returned to her day job following a brief hospitalization for a collapsed lung, the Emmy winner has again been hospitalized in New York after suffering chest pains.

"Mariska Hargitay went to the hospital this morning after experiencing some discomfort relating to her earlier lung condition," the actress' rep, Leslie Sloane



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BUSINESS**Aruba TODAY**

Fed survey: economy deteriorated in Jan., Feb.

By JEANNINE AVERSA,
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — After a dismal start to 2009, business people see more pain ahead, expecting no improvement in economic conditions till late this year at the earliest.

Their pessimism was evident in the Federal Reserve's latest snapshot of business activity nationwide. It showed sharp cutbacks affecting both blue-collar jobs that once churned out construction equipment and white-collar professionals like business consultants and accountants.

From factories in Cleveland to high-tech firms in Texas and California, the Fed's beige book reported widespread production declines.

"National economic conditions deteriorated further," the Fed's survey concluded. "The deterioration was broadbased, with only a few sectors such as basic food production and pharmaceuticals appearing to be exceptions."

Looking ahead, business people rated the prospects "for near-term improvement in economic conditions as poor, with a significant pickup not expected before late 2009 or early 2010."

The survey summarizes information from businesses and others supplied to the Fed's 12 regional banks. The information — most of it anecdotal — was collected on or before Feb. 23. It's used by the Fed to get a better idea of what's occurring at the ground level of the economy and will figure into discussions among Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and his colleagues when they meet next on March 17-18.

The Fed is widely expected to hold its key interest rate at a record low at that meeting as well as through the rest of this year to help revive the economy, which has been stuck in a recession since December 2007. The Fed also has said it will consider expanding existing relief programs or come up with new ones to extinguish the worst financial crisis since the 1930s.

Still, most economists believe



People search for jobs on computers at the California Employment Development Department in San Francisco, California, February 27, 2009. California's unemployment rate rose to 10.1 percent in January, its highest level in a quarter century, as recession tightened its grip on the most populous U.S. state.

REUTERS/Robert Galbraith (UNITED STATES)

the recession will drag on for most of this year even after the enactment of President Barack Obama's \$787 billion stimulus package of boosted federal spending and tax cuts designed to revive limp consumer spending and boost factory production. Bernanke told Congress Tuesday that the impact of the stimulus package is subject to "considerable uncertainty" given the current economic climate.

The nation's unemployment rate in January jumped to 7.6 percent, the highest in more than 16 years, and the number of newly laid-off people signing up for unemployment benefits has been climbing in recent weeks.

The government will release February jobs data on Friday and many economists expect the unemployment rate rose to 7.9 percent while employers cut nearly 650,000 jobs.

The economy also has been battered by a collapse in the housing market and a lockup in lending that has made it difficult, and more expensive, for people to secure financing for homes, cars and household appliances.

The Fed survey said there were "steep declines" in manufacturing activity in some sectors, and "pronounced declines overall."

Hardest hit were factories that make goods related to the

housing industry. Construction-related equipment and materials, such as primary metals, wood products and electrical equipment, saw especially steep drops in production. So did makers of furniture and cars, the report said.

Factories are getting hit by slower demand at home as well as overseas, where foreign customers are coping with their own economic troubles.

In the Cleveland region, overall factory production dropped about 25 percent compared with a year earlier.

Makers of computers, semiconductors and other information technology products saw further declines

in production and orders in the Dallas and San Francisco regions.

A few bright spots: makers of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology products saw production gains. The Boston region reported sales growing at a double-digit pace for biopharmaceutical firms. The Chicago region reported strong demand for pharmaceuticals and the Richmond region noted temporary hiring at pharmaceutical companies.

Food processors and makers of certain chemicals also saw pickups in the San Francisco and Philadelphia regions. And airplane makers in the St. Louis region are planning to expand existing production, according to the Fed survey.

White-collar businesses felt the recession, too.

Demand continued to fall for professional services, such as business consultants, accountants and legal services. The Boston region reported "dismal" business for temporary staffing firms. A New York company noted that activity by a major employment agency "virtually ground to a halt."

And even health care services — one of the few parts of the economy that has been adding jobs during the recession — felt fallout from the downturn in the Richmond, Minneapolis and San Francisco regions. Providers of health care services reported falling patient volumes, which were partly attributed to a drop in elective procedures, those regions reported.

Against that backdrop, consumer spending remained "very weak," the Fed survey said.

That's not news to Mark Steinke, the owner of Revival, a 6-year-old antiques and home decor store in Chicago. Sales are down about 20 percent this year in his store as shoppers gravitate more toward cheaper purchases, or items that are unique and hard to replicate. And as sales fall, so does Steinke's steady paycheck.

"I think in today's environment, the consistency is just not there, which is the most unsettling part," he said. □

Ford to cut \$10B in debt with cash, equity offer

By KIMBERLY S. JOHNSON and TOM KRISHER,
AP Auto Writer

DEARBORN, Mich. — Ford Motor Co. says it will eliminate up to \$10.4 billion of its debt by offering debtholders cash and stock instead, as the automaker continues to restructure amid a severe automotive sales downturn.

The Dearborn, Mich., automaker and its financial arm are putting up \$2.2 billion in cash and about 500 million shares of stock

to entice holders of bonds and secured-term debt.

The company said Wednesday it is restructuring the debt to reduce its costs and remain competitive, and it still does not intend to seek government loans.

General Motors Corp. and Chrysler LLC also are trying to swap debt for equity as a requirement of the \$17.4 billion in government loans they have received. □

Stocks move higher after 5 days of heavy selling

By SARA LEPRO,
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK—The stock market is showing signs of life as investors find glimmers of hope for an economic turnaround. Stocks rallied Wednesday after a week of heavy selling on word of a possible Chinese economic stimulus package and an Obama administration plan to help struggling homeowners. A slightly better-than-expected report on the services sector also helped. All the major indexes rose more than 3 percent.

The advance followed a week of unrelenting selling that has left major indexes plunging to levels not seen in more than a decade. "Virtually everyone was expecting some sort of a bounce, we just didn't know exactly when that would occur," said Randy Frederick, director of trading and derivatives at Charles Schwab. "You can't go down forever."

Investors were encouraged by details of a government program designed to help as many as 9 million borrowers stay in their homes through refinanced mortgages or loans that are modified to lower monthly payments.

Wall Street followed the lead of overseas markets, which rallied on optimism over a possible Chinese economic stimulus plan. Prices for oil and other commodities also climbed.

The Institute for Supply Management, a trade group of purchasing executives, said its services index fell to 41.6 last month from 42.9 in January, slightly above Wall Street's estimate of 41. Any reading above 50 signals growth.

Investors showed relief after release of the Federal Reserve's beige book, an assessment of the U.S. economy by region. The central bank said the economy has slowed further in the last two months and that the outlook for a quick recovery is bleak. Investors were relieved it wasn't worse. There were some bright spots: companies that make pharmaceuticals and biotechnology products are seeing demand increase.

In midafternoon trading, the Dow Jones industrial average rose 221.82, or 3.3 percent, to 6,947.84. The Standard & Poor's 500 index added 23.28, or 3.3 percent, to 719.61, while the Nasdaq composite index gained 42.00, or 3.2 percent, to 1,363.01.

The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies rose 11.75,

or 3.3 percent, to 372.76.

Three stocks rose for every one that fell on the New York Stock Exchange, where volume came to a light 1.1 billion shares. Industrial and commodity-related stocks led the market higher as oil prices jumped on hopes for the Chinese stimulus. Exxon Mobil Corp. rose \$1.14, or 1.8 percent, to \$65.50 and Chevron Corp. rose \$1.75, or 3 percent, to \$59.48. Other big gainers included aluminum producer Alcoa Inc., which advanced 68 cents, or 12.3 percent, to \$6.21, and Caterpillar Inc., which jumped \$3.16, or 14.1 percent, to \$25.63.

Wall Street has made attempts at a rally before, only to slump further as investors find little reason to hold on to stocks. Analysts warned that the market's advance Wednesday could be fleeting.

"Everybody's been beaten up so much in the last couple weeks, you've got to believe that people are gun-shy," said Bill Stone, chief investment strategist at PNC Wealth Management. "There's going to be a little bit of a lack of conviction this week particularly ahead of the Friday employment numbers."

The Labor Department will release its employment figures for February on Friday. The monthly report has become one of the most watched indicators of the economy's health, as rising unemployment and the loss of millions of jobs has led consumers to spend less.

On Tuesday, stocks extended their losses; the Standard & Poor's 500 index fell to its first close below 700 since October 1996. The decline, however, was milder than Monday's drop, which saw the Dow sink nearly 300 points and both the Dow and the S&P 500 index finish at their lowest levels since the late 1990s.

"We're very oversold," said Nicholas Colas, chief market strategist at BNY ConvergEx. "That's been slim comfort in the last couple of months, but it's still true."

General Electric Co. shares sank to an 18-year low Wednesday, a stark reminder that investors' concerns about the financial sector have yet to subside. The company has been fighting speculation that it may have to sink more money into GE Capital, which makes loans for credit cards, overseas mortgages and commercial projects. Shares dove 25 cents, or 3.6 percent, to \$6.76, after earlier falling to as

low as \$5.73, a level not seen since 1991.

News that U.S. Bancorp is chopping its dividend by 88 percent further rattled investors. The Minneapolis-based bank, viewed as one of the healthier companies in the industry, joins the ranks of JPMorgan Chase & Co. and dozens of other banks that have slashed their dividends to preserve capital amid the ongoing credit crisis and recession. U.S. Bancorp shares fell \$1.63, or 13 percent, to \$10.95.

The market did get a bit of good news from the housing industry Wednesday, as homebuilder Toll Brothers Inc. said its loss in the fiscal first quarter narrowed as it slashed expenses. Still, revenue plummeted 51 percent as the company sold fewer homes. Bond prices were mixed. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note rose to 3 percent from 2.89 percent late Tuesday. The yield on the three-month T-



An outside view of the New York Stock Exchange on Wall street. The number of US teens interested in a business career has tanked, overtaken by what youngsters see as more secure jobs in science and medicine, or even entertainment or sports, a poll showed Wednesday.

(AFP/Getty Images/File)

bill slipped to 0.25 percent from 0.26 percent.

The dollar fell against other major currencies. Gold prices also fell. Light, sweet crude for April delivery rose \$3.96 to \$45.61 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Overseas, Japan's Nikkei stock average rose 0.85 percent, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index gained 2.47 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 3.81 percent, Germany's DAX index jumped 5.42 percent, and France's CAC-40 rose 4.74 percent. □

Supreme Court rules against Wyeth in liability case

By Lisa Richwine and James Vicini

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the drugmaker Wyeth on Wednesday, holding that pharmaceutical companies can be held liable for harm from medicines that carry warnings approved by federal regulators.

By a 6-to-3 vote in a major defeat for the pharmaceutical industry, the high court ruled that U.S. Food and Drug Administration labeling approvals do not pre-empt state laws and shield companies from damages as part of liability claims.

A Vermont jury awarded \$7 million in legal damages to a guitarist, Diana Levine. Part of her arm had to be amputated after she was improperly injected with the anti-nausea drug Phenergan made by Wyeth as part of treatment for a migraine.

"The question we must decide is whether the FDA's approvals provide Wyeth with a complete defense to Levine's tort claims. We conclude that they do not," Justice John Paul Stevens concluded in the court's majority opinion.

Levine's attorneys argued Wyeth should have given stronger warnings about the dangers of administering the drug in the way she received it.

Wyeth said its labeling on Phenergan provided clear instructions and warnings. The company also said it believed federal law prohibited it from revising the information.

"We regret that the Supreme Court disagreed," Bert Rein, an outside lawyer for Wyeth, said in a statement.

Levine's attorney and consumer advocates welcomed the ruling as a win for patients.

The court's opinion "reaffirms the important role state laws play in promoting consumer safety and providing compensation for injuries," said David Frederick, the lawyer who argued the case for Levine.

Federal pre-emption has been a major drug

industry goal and was backed by the Republican Bush administration and business groups upset by large damage awards.

Stevens rejected the argument that Levine's claims of harm were pre-empted because it would be impossible for Wyeth to comply with both state-law and federal labeling requirements.

He said Wyeth could have unilaterally added a stronger warning about the IV-push administration used with Levine, and there is no evidence the FDA would have rejected the change.

Under federal law and FDA regulations, the manufacturer bears responsibility for the content of its label at all times, Stevens said in the 26-page opinion.

He also rejected Wyeth's argument that requiring it to comply with state-law duties to provide a stronger warning would interfere with Congress' purpose of entrusting an expert agency with drug labeling decisions.

Stevens said Levine presented evidence of at least 20 incidents before her injury in which a Phenergan injection resulted in gangrene and an amputation. As the amputations mounted, Wyeth could have analyzed the accumulating data and added a stronger warning, he said.

Stevens said the FDA traditionally has regarded state law as a complementary form of drug regulation.

"The FDA has limited resources to monitor the 11,000 drugs on the market, and manufacturers have superior access to information about their drugs, especially in the post-marketing phase as new risks emerge," he said.

Chief Justice John Roberts and justices Antonin Scalia and Samuel Alito dissented. "This case illustrates that tragic facts made bad law," Alito wrote.

Neither federal law nor FDA regulations "suggest that juries may second guess the FDA's labeling decisions," he wrote. □

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Publisher

John Chemaly Sr.

Managing Director

John A. Chemaly Jr.

General Manager

Grace Mary Maduro

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www.arubatoday.comE-mail news@arubatoday.com**Editor-in-Chief**

Julia C. Renfro

Contributing EditorsAngela Muzenhofer
Jan Falcone**International Editor**

Richard Brooks

Sales TeamElly Erasmus
Mareijke Croes
Wendy Kelkboom**Page Designer**

Dina Maria

Advertising CoordinatorSandra Loefstop-Duarte
aviso@bondia.com
bondia.aruba@gmail.com

3/4 (Texas)

Encouraging Signs on Defense Contracting Cuts

Christopher Hayes

The Nation -- Spencer Ackerman takes a look at the White House's new procurement guidelines and is pleasantly surprised:

Obama went further in remarks at the White House, calling it a "false choice" to say that protecting the country requires acquiescence to Pentagon waste. "In this time of great challenges," he said, "I recognize the real choice between investments that are designed to keep the American people safe and those that are designed to make a defense contractor rich." He also lent support to Sens. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and former presidential rival John McCain's (R-Ariz.) legislation to create new procurement oversight positions at the Pentagon. "The days of giving defense contractors a blank check are over," Obama said.

...Obama has now placed defense-contracting reform at the center of his efforts at cutting wasteful spending, and he's put cutting wasteful spending at the core of his deficit-reduction approach; and both the press and the Republican Party will watch that deficit-reduction approach as a test of his presidency. That line from his YouTube address on Saturday about being ready for a fight with lobbyists over his budget? He might mean it.

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) was also happy:

"For too long, American taxpayers have had to foot the bill for unnecessary, and costly projects that have served only to line the pockets of contractors," said AFGE National President John Gage..."This administration intends to stop contracting out government services that should be performed by federal employees...We hope this is the end of the era of privatization during which agencies were forced to contract out regardless of cost or quality, and at the expense of integrity and accountability of federal programs."

From a structural budgetary perspective two of the most pernicious but least noticed trends of the Bush administration have been the explosion of contracting and the massive increase in defense spending.

It cannot be repeated enough that defense spending over the last eight years -- not including the two wars -- has increased a shocking 77%. Anyone serious about "fiscal responsibility" should start with the low-hanging fruit and that's Pentagon procurement. Kudos to the White House for getting the ball rolling. □

The market's harsh verdict on Obamanomics

By Mark Skousen

New York -- Officially, President Obama's \$3.6 trillion budget is titled "A New Era of Responsibility."

That's false on two counts. It's an era -- not of responsibility, but of big-government taxation, spending, and regulation. And it's not new. History is full of attempts to inflate the state to grow the economy. Virtually all have ended badly. As Monday's sell-off reminds us, Wall Street's verdict on Obamanomics has been quick and sharp.

The president's budget is right in castigating the "troubled past" of the Bush administration, which spent money like a drunken sailor on education, healthcare, bailouts, and two seemingly endless wars in the greater Middle East, with virtually no regard for how to pay for a rapidly growing national debt. But now we must confront the troubled future. Obama has adopted the big-spending policies of George W. Bush, with trillions more proposed for education, bailouts, and healthcare. He wants to sharply reduce (but not end) the American presence in Iraq. At the same time, he plans to deploy an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan, which may lead to an expanded quagmire there.

Hasn't Obama read the bestseller "Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time," by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin? A Pakistani general who talked with Mr.

Mortenson aptly identified the real problem in Afghanistan: "The enemy is ignorance. The only way to defeat it is to build relationships with these people, to draw them into the modern world with education and business. Otherwise the fight will go on forever."

In some ways, Obama's plans are more grandiose than Bush's. He wants to encourage green technology and energy independence, and move toward national healthcare. The cost is enormous. The deficit for this year alone is expected to reach \$1.7 trillion. To help pay for this, Obama proposes the largest tax increase in history. Some of this, such as new taxes on oil and gas companies, is explicit. Some of it, such as the new cap and trade program, is quite subtle. And some of it will "merely" repeal the Bush tax rates on high incomes. But all of it represents a tremendous muzzle on the economy at a time when it needs to be unleashed.

Even these huge tax hikes won't be nearly sufficient to pay for the outlays. In fact, to pay for it in full, The Wall Street Journal pointed out, Uncle Sam would have to confiscate every penny earned by Americans making at least \$75,000 a year. What's the future for Obamanomics? The stock market's reaction doesn't bode well. The Dow has fallen 18 percent since the last trading day of Bush's term. Clearly, Wall Street thinks that Obama's tax, spend, and regulate policies will be a disaster.

Despite the dire headlines, the world is not coming to an end, we are not headed into another Great Depression, and free-market capitalism has not breathed its last breath.

In my book, "The Big Three in Economics," I found that the press has frequently and prematurely written the obituary of Adam Smith and his free-market philosophy, only to see a new and more vibrant global marketplace reemerge after being savagely attacked by Keynesians, Marxists, and assorted socialists. Market capitalism survived and prospered after the boom-bust industrial revolution of the 19th century, and the Great Depression and world wars of the 20th century. It will recover from the financial panic of 2008-09 and Obamanomics.

Adam Smith, the supreme defender of market capitalism, expressed this optimism well in 1776 when he wrote in "The Wealth of Nations":

"The uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition ... is frequently powerful enough to maintain the natural progress of things toward improvement, in spite both of the extravagance of government, and of the greatest errors of administration."

In sum, the ideas of Adam Smith and his modern followers will make a comeback. Already, pro-market forces are gathering in Congress to defeat Obama's ambitious and highly socialistic agenda. □

Review: Kindle e-book reader comes to the iPhone

NEW YORK - Amazon.com Inc. has received a lot of attention and respectable sales for its Kindle e-book reader, but it's hardly made a dent in the hardcover armor of the old-fashioned paper book.

On Wednesday, the Internet company revealed another prong of its strategy in making its gigantic e-book library available on a device already in millions of hands: the iPhone.

This is a big step for e-books, which have lingered outside the mainstream for nearly two decades even as digital media have conquered music and film distribution. Amazon's move combines a readily available device that's suitable for reading with a good distribution system and reasonably priced books.

That said, the first version of the iPhone application is crude, and Amazon would do well to release a software update soon to demonstrate its commitment to the iPhone.

But before we get into that, let's take a look at how the Kindle app works. It's free, available in Apple Inc.'s App Store for U.S. residents. Amazon says it's working on taking it international, though I wouldn't hold my breath because that would involve securing international publishing rights. Apart from the iPhone, it will also work on the iPod Touch.

Once you've loaded the app, you can buy books on Amazon's Web store. You'll have to use either a computer or the iPhone's browser. Unlike some other e-book readers, including the Kindle, the app doesn't have a built-in store. Considering that most people are familiar with the Web site, this isn't a major shortcoming.

New books cost a few dollars less than the print versions, and some public-domain books are available for 99 cents.

Head back to the application, and it will load up the books you bought wirelessly. The Apple devices have gigabytes of storage memory, and unless you've filled it with music and movies, they can hold hundreds, even thousands of books.

Tap one, and its text fills the screen. Turn the page by swiping over it with your finger. If you do something else with your phone, then return to the reader app, it will show you the last page you were reading, so there's no need to fiddle with bookmarks or bend page corners.

That's great for reading short snatches here and there. Whip your iPhone out in the elevator, and your co-travellers won't know that you're ignoring them in the best way by catching up on Danielle Steel. You won't look like a snob in the supermarket checkout line, even if you're reading Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma."

Since the screen is backlit, you don't need a light source. If you've already bought a book for the Kindle device, it will load on your iPhone for free, and vice versa. If you're reading a book both on the Kindle and the iPhone, the two devices will communicate to keep track of how far you've read.

This sounds elegant, but the app has a mildly annoying habit of freezing when it's trying to communicate with Amazon when your wireless connection is weak.

Most of the other shortcomings have to do with reading comfort.

E-book readers haven't taken off in part because people don't like reading on a computer screen. The Kindle reading device, which costs \$359, tackles that by using a novel screen technology known as electronic ink. It's not backlit, so it looks a lot more like paper, but it has numerous drawbacks, most notably that it can't show a bright white or a really dark black. Since it doesn't show any colors either, it looks like gray, unbleached paper printed with weak ink.

The iPhone and iPod Touch screens are nothing like that, of course. They have great contrast and color. But the Kindle app will show all books on a white background that many will find too bright, making it uncomfortable to read. You can turn down the screen brightness, but that

will leave it too dark for other applications.

Other e-book readers available on the iPhone, like eReader and Stanza, let you pick a background and text color that won't hurt your eyes. These other reading applications also let you pick the font and set the margins on the screen. The only adjustment the Amazon app offers is the font size. I also noticed that the app cut off the ends of some indented paragraphs in Max Brooks' "The Zombie Survival Guide," making them impossible to read.

The Kindle 2, which went on sale last week, doesn't do this. Hopefully Amazon will fix the app before there's a major zombie uprising.

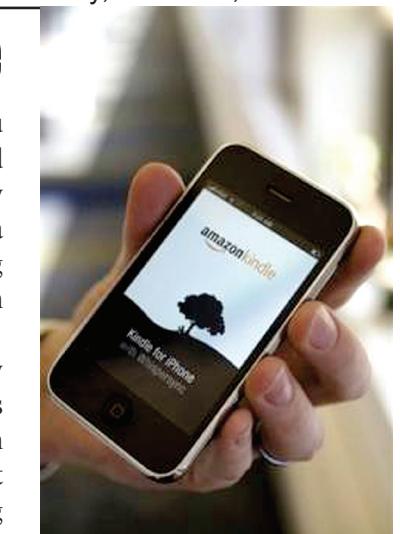
But the Kindle on the iPhone is still the best e-book reader I've seen so far.

Other applications are hampered by a weak selection of books and inelegant ordering systems. You can probably find something you won't mind reading on the

eReader and Stanza, but if you have a particular book in mind from the outset, you're likely to be disappointed. Stanza has the bad habit of freezing for nearly a minute when launched.

A third, relatively new application called Shortcovers gave me frequent connection problems, and perplexingly it seems to emphasize providing samples rather than full books, even when the books are in the public domain.

The eReader does have the virtue of being available for other cell phones, so you're not completely left out if you don't have an iPhone. Another alternative, Mobipocket, is available for practically every "smart" phone except the iPhone. But there are few phones out there with screens large and sharp enough to make reading pleasurable. The Kindle 2 is four times the size of the iPhone. You might prefer Kindle's screen, but I think most people will be fine with the phone once they



An Apple iPhone equipped with Amazon.com's Kindle for iPhone book reader is shown Wednesday, March 4, 2009 in New York.

(AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

get used to it. The dedicated reader has much longer battery life, but the iPhone will last for a domestic flight, and you need a charge the phone every other day or so anyway. Perhaps the biggest advantage of the Kindle 2 is that it can subscribe to newspapers, which load wirelessly every day.

The iPhone makes up for this to some extent through free news applications. □

Catholics are urged to give up texting for Lent

ROME - Roman Catholic bishops in Italy are urging the faithful to go on a high-tech fast for Lent, switching off modern appliances from cars to iPods and abstaining from surfing the Web or text messaging until Easter.

The suggestion goes far beyond no-meat Fridays, giving a modern twist to traditional forms of abstinence in the five-week period Christians set aside for fasting and prayer ahead of Easter.

And it shows the Church's increasing focus on technology's uses — with many of the Lenten appeals posted on various dioceses' Web sites.

Dioceses and Catholic groups in Modena, southern Bari and other cities have called for a ban on text messaging every Friday in Lent, which began last week with Ash Wednesday. "It's a small way to remember the importance of concrete and not virtual relationships," the Modena diocese said in a statement. "It's an instrument to remind us that our actions and lifestyles have consequences in distant countries."

The diocese said the "no SMS day" seeks to draw attention to years of conflict in Congo fueled in part by the struggle for control of coltan mines. The mineral is an essential material in cell phones.

The Turin diocese is suggesting the faithful not watch television during Lent. In the northeastern city of Trento, the church has created a "new lifestyles" calendar with proposals for each week of Lent.

Some ideas: Leave cars at home and hop on a bike or a bus; stop throwing chewing gum on the street and start recycling waste; enjoy the silence of a week without the Internet and iPods.

Italian laity and clergy have reacted cautiously to the proposals. Some say Lenten abstinence should be a personal matter, and others contend that people who need technology to work shouldn't be asked to do without.

"What does giving up mean? If the use is capricious, then abstinence is welcome, but if technology is needed for work it makes no sense," said the Rev. Giancarlo Angelo Andreis, a priest at a Rome basilica.

"I have to decide how to experience the Lent period. I should give up something if I really feel it, not because the Church says so," said 26-year-old Angelo Dente.

The Church is trying to balance an increasing appreciation of modern communication with a wariness of new media.

In January, the Vatican launched its own YouTube channel, with Pope Benedict XVI welcoming viewers to this "great family that knows no borders."

Benedict praised social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace for forging friendships and understanding, but cautioned that online networking could isolate people from real social interaction.

The pope has also warned about what he has called the tendency of entertainment media to trivialize sex and promote violence. □

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PALM BEACH – The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

Low carb eaters will have all their expectations surpassed with a tempting carnivorous selection of umpteen cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but **Texas de Brazil's** version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more. The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, **Texas de Brazil** will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

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On Top Of The News

Email: arubatoday@gmail.com

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Britain's Brown warns against U.S. protectionism

By DESMOND BUTLER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP)

— British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said Wednesday that an "economic hurricane" has swept the world and warned U.S. leaders against viewing the crisis as isolated to America's borders. In a formal address to Congress, Brown said that resorting to protectionism would make every nation vulnerable.

"Should we succumb to a race to the bottom and a protectionism that history tells us that, in the end, protects no one?" he said. "No. We should have the confidence that we can seize the opportunities ahead and make the future work for us."

Brown addressed a joint meeting of Congress, an honor reserved for America's closest allies, and was met by the lawmakers with pomp and enthusiasm. Despite the gloomy global economic outlook, the prime minister



British Prime Minister Gordon Brown addresses a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, March 4, 2009. Vice President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif. listen in the background.

conveyed optimism, in a punchy speech pointing to future opportunity.

"We should have the confidence—America and Britain most of all—that we

can seize the opportunities ahead and make the future work for us," he said.

He predicted that the world economy would double in the next two decades.

Associated Press

Brown's remarks come as he is looking for a boost to his own political fortunes. In hard political times at home, Brown hopes to benefit from his earlier meeting with the

new American president and to demonstrate British leadership at a time of economic uncertainty.

It was unclear whether President Barack Obama, who hosted Brown at the White House on Tuesday, heard the British prime minister's speech, but he later telephoned his congratulations. The office of White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said the two had a 10-minute conversation, and Obama thanked Brown for a productive visit. They met at the White House on Tuesday, and Brown was leaving Wednesday. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said he did not see Brown's speech and did not know if Obama did. Brown was facing a U.S. Congress deeply divided on how to solve America's economic crisis, with Republicans sparring with Obama on whether government intervention and money can salvage financial markets.

Continued on page B4

Court issues war crimes warrant for Sudan's Bashir

By MIKE CORDER

Associated Press Writer

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant Wednesday for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. He is the first sitting head of state the court has ordered arrested.

The three-judge panel said there was insufficient evidence to support charges of genocide in a war in which up to 300,000 people have died and 2.7 million have fled their homes. Al-Bashir's government denounced the warrant as part of a Western conspiracy aimed at destabilizing the vast oil-rich nation south of Egypt.

African and Arab nations fear the warrant will destabilize the whole region, bring even more conflict in Darfur and threaten the fragile peace deal that ended decades of civil war between northern and southern Sudan. China, which buys two-thirds of Sudan's oil, supports the African and Arab positions. Some African nations reportedly threatened to pull out of the court in retaliation for a warrant. Thirty African countries are among the court's 108 member states. In a show of defiance Tuesday in anticipation of the decision, al-Bashir told supporters at a rally, "We are telling them to immerse it in water and drink it," a common Arabic insult meant to show extreme disrespect.

Hundreds of Sudanese waving pictures of the president and denouncing the court quickly turned out in a rally at the Cabinet building in Khartoum. Security was increased around many embassies, and some diplomats and aid workers stayed home amid fears of retaliation against Westerners. "He is suspected of being criminally responsible ... for intentionally directing attacks against an important part of the civilian population of Darfur, Sudan, murdering, exterminating, raping, torturing and forcibly transferring large numbers of civilians, and pillaging their property," court spokeswoman Laurence Blairon said. If al-Bashir is brought to trial and prosecuted,



Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir attends a graduation ceremony at an air force academy near Khartoum, Sudan, Wednesday, March 4, 2009. Sudan denounced an international tribunal that issued an arrest warrant against its president Wednesday on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, calling it a "white man's court" that aims to destabilize the country.

Associated Press

he faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

The U.N., which has a joint peacekeeping mission in Darfur with the African Union, will continue to deal with al-Bashir, U.N. spokeswoman Michele Montas said at U.N.

headquarters in New York.

"President al-Bashir is the head of state of Sudan, and United Nations officials will continue to deal with president al-Bashir when they need to do so," Montas said.

Continued on page B6

Rove, Miers to testify in prosecutor firings



In this March 24, 2007 file photo, Karl Rove, left, prepares to address the Jackson County Lincoln Day dinner in Jackson, Mich. Rove and former White House counsel Harriet Miers, right, agreed Wednesday to testify before Congress under oath about the firings of U.S. attorneys.

By NEDRA PICKLER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Former top aides to President George W. Bush agreed Wednesday to testify before Congress under oath about the firings of U.S. attorneys, a controversy involving allegations of political interference that became a major issue in Bush's second term. The Bush White House had fought attempts to force Karl Rove and Harriet Miers to

Associated Press

testify, and the agreement — steered by aides to President Barack Obama — ended that constitutional standoff with Congress. Both the White House and lawmakers, especially now that Democrat Obama has replaced Republican Bush — were leery of having a judge settle the question about the limits of executive privilege, for fear of losing. The agreement calls for Rove and Miers, Bush's top political adviser and White

House counsel, to testify before the House Judiciary Committee in closed depositions "under the penalty for perjury," said House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, D-Mich. The committee says it also might call the two for public testimony. The arrangement ends a lawsuit over whether former White House aides could be forced to testify about matters on which they advised the president. Bush had ordered his Rove and Miers not to testify in the U.S. attorneys investigation, and the Judiciary Committee sued a year ago. Last July, U.S. District Judge John Bates rejected Bush's contention that senior White House advisers were immune from the committee's subpoenas, siding with Congress' power to investigate the executive branch. The Bush administration had appealed the decision. Bush spokesman Rob Saliterman said Wednesday, "At the urging of the Obama administration, and in consideration of the executive branch interests at stake, we have reached an accommodation with the House Judiciary Committee that

satisfies the committee's desire for additional information and will finally put this matter to rest." Justice Department officials said the committee and the Obama administration would make a joint filing to the court asking the judge to stay the lawsuit over the issue. If the agreement is breached, the case could be revived.

White House Counsel Greg Craig said the deal came after "a tremendous amount of hard work, patience and flexibility on both sides."

"The agreement will allow the committee to complete its investigation into the U.S. attorneys matter, and it will do so in the way such disputes have historically been resolved — through negotiation and accommodation between the legislative and executive branches," Craig said. "The president is pleased that the parties have agreed to resolve this matter amicably."

At issue is the firing of nine U.S. attorneys. An internal Bush Justice Department investigation concluded that — despite administration denials — political considerations

played a part in the firings of as many as four of them.

Former Attorney General Michael Mukasey named a special prosecutor in September to investigate whether former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, other Bush administration officials or Republicans in Congress should face criminal charges in the firings.

Conyers said the committee also has the right to take a deposition from William Kelley, a former White House lawyer who played a role in the firings, and that Bush administration documents relevant to the dismissals will be turned over to the committee.

"This is a victory for the separation of powers and congressional oversight," Conyers said in a statement. "It is also a vindication of the search for truth. I am determined to have it known whether U.S. attorneys in the Department of Justice were fired for political reasons, and if so, by whom."

The committee will probably make the transcripts public, said a committee aide, who wasn't authorized to immediately disclose committee plans. □



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Border violence leads to armor-plated vehicles

By MICHELLE ROBERTS

Associated Press Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — The drug violence in Mexico has gotten so bad that booming numbers of Mexican and American professionals are having their cars fitted with armor plates, bulletproof glass and James Bond-style gadgets such as electrified door handles and push-button smokescreens.

Until recently, it was mostly movie stars, business moguls and politicians who took such precautions. But now, industry officials say, the customers include factory owners, doctors, newspaper publishers and others who have business on both sides of the border and fear killings, kidnappings and

carjackings by drug dealers or people in their debt.

The customers "don't have to be very big," said Mark Burton, CEO of International Armoring Corp. of Ogden, Utah. "This becomes almost a necessity."

One San Antonio company said it expects a 50 percent increase in business this year. The modifications typically cost \$80,000 to \$100,000, and they are being done not just on limousines, but on Toyotas, Hondas, pickup trucks and SUVs.

"I feel we need to be in a cocoon that is impenetrable," said a businessman who runs factories in Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, and has gotten two Chevrolet Suburbans

armored since October 2007. He spoke on condition of anonymity, saying he fears for his family's safety after one of his sons was the victim of a kidnapping attempt.

The war between Mexican authorities and the country's cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine cartels has killed 1,000 people so far this year. Last year, Juarez alone had more than 1,100 slayings. The cartels have killed police, military officers and civilians from Cancun to Tijuana as they battle for control of drug-trafficking corridors.

Customers get not only armor plating but tires that will run when flat and bulletproof glass, which bursts into a spider web pattern but won't break, even when shot with an AR-15 assault rifle, a weapon of choice among drug smugglers.

Other customers buy a package that will turn a Ford F-150 pickup or SUV into something out of a Batman movie: A button releases a cloud of white smoke for escaping a pursuing car. If the assailant makes it through that, the driver can release spikes to flatten the pursuer's tires. And finally, if the attacker makes it to the car, electrified door handles can give him a non-lethal jolt.

Jorge Valencia, who has been working in the security business in Mexico for most of the past two decades, said his company bought its first armor-plated car in the mid-

House panel scrutinizes immigration program

WASHINGTON — The federal government will rewrite its agreements with local and state law agencies that enforce immigration laws to provide greater guidance and control, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official told a House panel Wednesday.

William Riley said a draft of the document that will more clearly explain the purpose of a controversial program known as 287(g) is circulating within the agency.

ICE, which is part of the Homeland Security Department, currently has 67 agreements with local and state police agencies to enforce federal immigration laws. Police participation in 287(g) began in 1996 and has escalated since 2006. As more agencies have signed on to the program, allegations of racial profiling and civil rights violations have risen.

The 287(g) program was the focus of a House Homeland Security Committee hearing Wednesday. The scrutiny follows a Government Accountability Office investigation that found immigration officials didn't clearly explain to officers how to use their arrest authority under the program, nor did they tell local officers that the program is meant for the

pursuit of serious offenders. Also, GAO found ICE failed to set up proper supervision or create a good data collection system to help determine whether the program is working.

Richard Stana, a GAO director, said that with 67 participating agencies "we ought to know now what we want out of these jurisdictions."

"We have to identify the bad people and we have to deal with them," Stana said. "But if we spend a lot of time on people who aren't bad, there are other programs dealing with that." □



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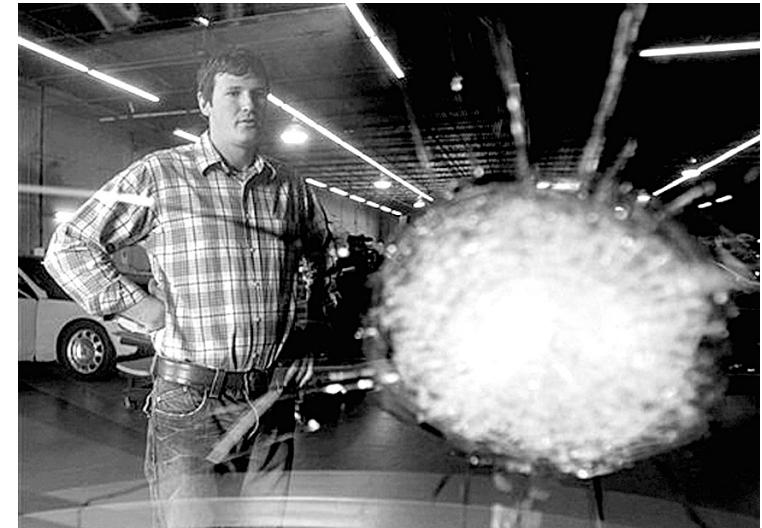
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Texas Armoring Corp. President and CEO Trent Kimball examines a bullet proof windshield after it was shot at their facility in San Antonio, Thursday, Feb. 26, 2009. Due to increased drug-cartel violence in northern Mexico, American companies say they're seeing increases in the number of cars they're asked to outfit with armor plating, bulletproof glass and defensive gadgets like push-button smoke screens and electrified door handles.

Associated Press

1990s, but it was mostly for politicians, and mostly out of an abundance of caution.

Nowadays, the danger is far greater, he said, noting that many kidnappings are happening in public places.

"The main streets in Ciudad Juarez have assassinations in the middle of the day," said Valencia, who did not want his company's name to be used for fear of putting his clients in jeopardy.

Companies that install bulletproofing—or "blindaje" in Spanish—have been doing a booming business in Mexico, too. But some businessmen, like the Juarez factory owner, who lives in the United States, are convinced the armoring is better in the U.S.

Under a 2004 regulation, U.S.

companies need an export license from the Commerce Department to ship a car that has been armored out of the country. The rule is aimed at preventing drug dealers and other criminals from acquiring such vehicles.

Before the rule, Trent Kimball, CEO of San Antonio-based Texas Armoring Corp., put armor plating on vehicles for a customer who claimed to be a rancher. Kimball later found himself testifying at the customer's drug-trafficking trial.

Texas Armoring, which started in the 1970s armoring limousines and other vehicles for world leaders, did about 100 cars last year and expects to complete 150 this year, Kimball said. □

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British Prime Minister Gordon Brown shakes hands with Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, March 4, 2009, after Brown announced that Kennedy's father, Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., will receive an honorary knighthood, during Brown's address to a joint session of Congress in Washington , Wednesday, March 4, 2009 .

BROWN

Continued from Page B1

Brown called on the House and Senate leaders to "seize the moment" because international leaders were willing more than ever to work together. "Just think how each of our actions, if combined, could

mean a whole, much greater than the sum of the parts," Brown said. The speech put heavy emphasis on the British-American "special relationship," at a time of anxiety in Britain that America's focus under the new U.S. administration was



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drifting from Europe to the economic opportunities and growing powers in Asia.

"I come in friendship to renew for new times our special relationship that is founded on our shared history, our shared values, and I believe, our shared futures," Brown said. "I know there is no power on earth than can drive us apart." Brown was using his Washington visit to lay the groundwork for a G-20 economic summit of advanced and developing nations meeting in London next month. The summit, which Brown is chairing, is critical for improving global economic confidence as well as Brown's political prospects.

Brown said the United States would be able to work with the most pro-American European leadership in recent memory, a leadership that wants to cooperate more closely in order to be a stronger partner. The speech was panned at home by Liberal Democrat

Deputy Leader, Vince Cable. "Gordon Brown seemed to offer a lot of warm words but very few hard plans to fight the recession which has engulfed the world economy and his government," he said.

Brown was addressing Congress a day after he became the first European leader to meet with President Barack Obama at the White House. Brown's speech to a joint meeting of Congress was a useful stage for the British leader, who is seeking a boost at home from his U.S. visit. On Tuesday, Obama and Brown looked to coordinate U.S. and British approaches to fix the world economy. The two leaders sat down in the Oval Office for about an hour and shared a working lunch afterward in the White House residence. It was their third meeting, although their first since Obama became president in January. Brown came to Washington hoping to reach agreement

with Obama on a pact to take into the G-20 summit next month. Brown wants the same banking standards governing transparency, disclosure, accountability and other issues that apply in the United States and Britain to apply to institutions in other nations, particularly those in areas like Eastern Europe and Latin America. For Brown, who has been falling significantly behind the conservative opposition in British opinion polls, the Washington visit presented a big opportunity. With his political fortunes in doubt, the British leader hoped that standing shoulder-to-shoulder with his much more popular American counterpart would give him a lift.

At the same time, he needed to strike the right tone, not appearing too reluctant to challenge his trans-Atlantic ally. Brown's predecessor, Tony Blair, was dismissed as President George W. Bush's poodle by detractors. □

Britain gives Sen. Kennedy honorary knighthood

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press Writer

LONDON (AP) — He won't be allowed to call himself Sir Ted, but U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy has been awarded an honorary

knighthood by Britain.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced the honor Wednesday during an address to a joint session of Congress in Washington. Kennedy, who

is battling brain cancer, did not attend Brown's speech. Brown said Kennedy had helped bring peace to Northern Ireland, expand health care for Americans and improve access to education for children around the world.

"And for all those things we owe a great debt to the life and courage of Sen. Edward Kennedy," Brown said.

Brown referred to the senator as "Sir Edward Kennedy," although unlike British knights he is not entitled to use the honorific "Sir" before his name.

Knighthoods are bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II, but recipients are selected by the government or an advisory committee.

Kennedy, scion of an Irish-American political dynasty, is known in Britain for his involvement in the long process that led to Northern Ireland's 1998 Good Friday peace accord.

The 77-year-old brother of the late President John F. Kennedy has served in the Senate since 1962.

In a statement, Kennedy said he was "deeply grateful to her majesty the queen and to Prime Minister Brown for this extraordinary honor." □

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'Octomom' spawns bills limiting embryo implants

By SHANNON McCAFFREY
Associated Press Writer

ATLANTA — Lawmakers in two states, outraged by California's "Octomom," are seeking to limit the number of embryos that may be implanted by fertility clinics. The legislation in Missouri and Georgia is intended to spare taxpayers from footing the bill for women having more children than they can afford. But critics say the measures also would make having even one child more difficult for women who desperately want to become mothers.

"What they are proposing is a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach," said Dr. Andrew Toledo, medical director of the Atlanta-based Reproductive Biology Associates. "Not every couple and not every patient is the same."

Infertility doctors argue that decisions on how many embryos to transfer should be left up to medical experts familiar with a patient's individual circumstances.

Debate has raged since Nadya Suleman gave birth to octuplets in Bellflower, Calif., on Jan. 26.

She has six other children, lives in her mother's three-bedroom home and has relied on food stamps and disability income to provide for her family.

"It's unforgivable," said Ralph Hudgens, a state senator who is sponsoring the Georgia bill. "This woman already has six children. She's unemployed, and she's going and having 14 children on the backs of the taxpayers of the state of California."

Hudgens, a Republican, has proposed legislation that would allow no more than two embryos to be implanted at any one time in a woman

younger than 40. For women older than 40, the legislation would limit the number of embryos to three to account for increased difficulty getting pregnant.

Supporters say the measure is needed to rein in lucrative baby-making businesses often more concerned with success rates and profit than with ethics.

Hudgens, a Republican, agreed to sponsor the bill after being approached by the Georgia Right to Life group. The proposal comes up for a hearing Thursday before the Senate's Health and Human Services Committee.

Supporters say the bill would cut down on the number of unused embryos. But opponents argue that would severely limit the options of women paying \$10,000 to \$15,000 for each fertility cycle.

In Missouri, a bill seeks to enact guidelines from the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. The guidelines include a recommended number of embryos that should be implanted in a woman based on her age and prognosis for a successful pregnancy.

In most cases, the society calls for two or three embryos, though women older than 40 could be implanted with up to five.

"It's just not a good thing to be having that many multiple births if you can avoid it," said Missouri state Rep. Rob Schaaf, a family physician who sponsored the bill. "I'm just simply saying keep the risk down."

The legislative efforts concern Bernita Malloy, a federal prosecutor in Atlanta who said she would not have been able to have her 20-month-old daughter, Makenzie, under

the proposed law. It took 25 eggs and three in-vitro cycles for her to conceive one child. "They are legislating based on a knee-jerk reaction," Malloy said. "What they don't get is every embryo doesn't make a baby. This bill is devastating."

Legal experts say limiting a woman's right to procreate raises constitutional concerns.

"I think it raises huge legal questions," said Ruth Claiborne, an Atlanta lawyer specializing in family law and infertility issues. "There are individual legal interests in procreation, and I think you would almost certainly see this challenged (in the courts)."

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine guidelines are not binding, but doctors do answer to individual state licensing boards.

"This is an unregulated industry that is driven by money," said David Prentice, senior fellow for life sciences at the conservative Family Research Center.

Toledo, of the Atlanta reproductive group, said reproductive specialists are being tarnished by the actions of the doctor in California who implanted Suleman with six fertilized embryos. She went on to have octuplets after two of the embryos presumably split.

The Medical Board of California said last week it was looking into the Suleman case to see if there was a "violation of the standard of care."

According to reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 20 percent of clinics nationwide follow the guidelines. For women under 35, the reports



Sen. Ralph Hudgens (R-Hull) talks with an unidentified woman on the floor of the Senate Wednesday, March 4, 2009 in Atlanta. Hudgens is the sponsor of a bill that would put limits on fertility clinics and the number of embryos that can be implanted at any one time.

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show that just 83 of 426 calling for no more than two clinics followed the guidance embryos. □

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Clinton accuses Iran of seeking to intimidate



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, smiles with Britain's Foreign Secretary David Miliband at the start of a NATO and EU dinner at Egmont Palace in Brussels, Wednesday March 4, 2009.

By ROBERT BURNS

Associated Press Writer

BRUSSELS (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton swiped hard at Iran on Wednesday, accusing its hardline leaders of fomenting divisions in the Arab world, promoting terrorism, posing threats to Israel and Europe, and seeking to "intimidate as far as they think their voice can reach." Her remarks, at the conclusion of two days of talks in Egypt, Israel and the West Bank,

were notable for coming from an Obama administration that has raised the prospect of diplomatic engagement with Iran as part of a new direction in U.S. foreign policy. In remarks to reporters aboard her plane en route from Ramallah to Brussels, Clinton said that in her talks with Arab foreign ministers and other leaders she heard "over and over and over again" a deep-seated worry about threats posed by the Iranians. "It is clear that Iran intends

Associated Press

to interfere with the internal affairs of all of these people and try to continue their efforts to fund terrorism, whether it's Hezbollah or Hamas or other proxies," she said.

The sharp objections to Iranian behavior that Clinton enumerated are the same as those underlined by the Bush administration during its dealings with Tehran. The difference is that the Obama administration says it sees merit in pressing the Iranians to discuss the problems, even if talks fail or the Iranians refuse to engage.

In Tehran on Wednesday, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, accused President Barack Obama of following the same mistaken path as the Bush administration with his "unconditional" support of Israel. Khamenei also called Israel a "cancerous tumor" that is on the verge of collapse. He said Israeli leaders should be put on trial for its military offensive in Gaza, which ended with a shaky cease-fire in mid-January.

During her visit to Ramallah, Clinton met with the top leaders

of the Palestinian Authority that administers the West Bank, President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. She then flew to Brussels for a NATO foreign ministers' meeting Thursday that is expected to focus on developing a new strategy for the war in Afghanistan and prospects for improving relations with Russia.

Clinton offered strong support for Abbas and for pushing hard to restart peace talks with Israel. Standing next to him, she told a news conference that the Palestinian Authority is the "only legitimate government of the Palestinian people."

Abbas has steadily lost support at home, particularly after a year of inconclusive peace talks with Israel. His Islamic militant Hamas rivals, who seized Gaza from him in 2007, are widely seen as emerging stronger from Israel's recent offensive against them.

In the in-flight interview, Clinton reiterated that Obama stands ready to engage in talks with Iran, with whom Washington severed diplomatic relations after Iran's Islamic

revolution three decades ago. "But we want to make sure it's constructive," she said. The main source of friction is Iran's nuclear program, which the United States and many in the international community believe is intended to produce weapons. The Iranians insist their program is designed solely for civilian energy production. The U.S. also is critical of Iran's efforts to spread its influence across the greater Middle East by supporting the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. The U.S. also has been critical of Iran's support of Shiite extremists in Iraq.

In Washington, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown echoed Clinton's remarks, again calling on Iran to suspend its nuclear program. In a formal address to Congress on Wednesday, Brown said the U.S. and Britain were ready for Tehran to rejoin the world community and to stop threatening peace.

Clinton offered perhaps her strongest criticism of Iran when asked about the



In this Monday, Sept. 27, 2004 file photo, women sit under the shade of a large tree on a wadi (dry riverbed) at a makeshift camp for internally displaced people near Seleah village, West Darfur, Sudan. The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant Wednesday, March 4, 2009 for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Associated Press

no international mechanism to arrest him. The main tool the court has is diplomatic pressure for countries to hand over suspects.

The United States is not a member of the international court, but in Washington, the State Department called on all parties to the Darfur conflict to exercise restraint and

cooperate with the decision, which it said could be helpful in ending the violence.

"The United States is strongly committed to the pursuit of peace in Sudan and believes those who have committed atrocities should be held accountable for their crimes," spokesman Gordon Duguid said, adding "it is evident that the government of Sudan has the brunt of the responsibility for what has happened in Darfur."

Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo suggested al-Bashir could be arrested if he flies out of Sudan. "As soon as Mr. al-Bashir travels in international airspace, his plane could be intercepted and he could be arrested. That is what I expect," the prosecutor said.

"Like Slobodan Milosevic or Charles Taylor, Omar al-Bashir's destiny is to face justice," Moreno Ocampo said referring to the former presidents of Yugoslavia and Liberia who were indicted while in office and ended up on trial in The Hague.

Sudan does not recognize its jurisdiction and refuses to arrest suspects. U.N. peacekeepers and other international agencies operating in Sudan have no mandate to implement the warrant, and Sudanese officials have warned them not to go outside their mandates.

Asked why judges, in a 2-1 split decision, did not issue the warrant for genocide, Blairon explained that genocide requires a clear intent to destroy in part or as a whole a specific group.

"In this particular case, the pretrial chamber has not been able to find there were reasonable grounds to establish a genocidal intent," she said.

She said prosecutors could ask again for genocide charges to be added to the warrant if they can produce new evidence. Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo said he would study the ruling before deciding whether to keep pursuing genocide charges.

The war in Sudan's western Darfur region began in 2003, when rebel ethnic African

WAR CRIMES

Continued from Page B1

Blairon rejected accusations that the warrant was part of a political plot and said the decision was made purely on legal grounds.

Al-Bashir denies the war crimes accusations and refuses to deal with the court, and there is currently

groups, complaining of discrimination and neglect, took up arms against the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum. In 2005, the U.N. Security Council asked Moreno Ocampo to investigate crimes in Darfur.

The Rome statute that set up the International Criminal Court allows the Security Council to vote to defer or suspend for a year the investigation or prosecution of a case. It also gives the council authority to renew such a resolution.

The 52-member countries of the African Union and 26 states of the Arab League make up about a third of U.N. member states and they have said they would call for such a suspension.

But the council is sharply divided on suspending the case and is unlikely to take any action. Some African nations reportedly have threatened to pull out of the court in retaliation for the warrant. Thirty African countries are among the court's 108 member states. □

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Bad altimeter a factor in Netherlands plane crash

By TOBY STERLING

Associated Press Writer

AMSTERDAM (AP) — A false reading from a faulty altimeter caused an autopilot to sharply slow a Turkish Airlines jet short of the runway last month, sending it plunging into a muddy field and killing nine people, Dutch investigators said Wednesday. The flight carrying 135 passengers and crew crashed a kilometer (less than a mile) from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport as it was landing on Feb. 25. The pilots were among the dead.

One of the plane's altimeters, a device that measures altitude, had registered that the plane was flying below sea level and caused the autopilot to rapidly reduce power before the crash, officials said.

The Boeing 737-800's flight recorders showed false readings from the same altimeter on two flights before the crash, chief investigator Pieter van Vollenhoven said. He did not say if pilots had noticed the previous incorrect readings.

The Dutch Safety Authority said it had issued a warning to Boeing as a result of its investigation, asking the company to alert customers that when altimeters are not functioning properly "the

automatic pilot and the gas system coupled to them may not be used for approach and landing," Van Vollenhoven said.

Boeing said it was reminding all operators of its 737s to carefully monitor primary flight instruments during critical phases, adding that it was carefully monitoring the fleet.

The deputy chairman of the Turkish pilots' association, Ahmet Izgi, told Turkey's NTV news channel that the preliminary Dutch findings were "not satisfactory" and said it would be odd for the pilots to not react to a false altimeter reading in time to save the plane.

The Turkish Civil Aviation Directorate said the "announcements and given answers are far from clarifying the reasons behind the accident and bringing about a conclusion."

Van Vollenhoven said landing the plane on autopilot was not unusual and the pilots could not see the runway as the plane began its descent because of clouds and a light rain.

At 1950 feet (around 700 meters) the airplane's left altimeter suddenly and mistakenly registered an altitude of 8 feet (about 2 meters) below sea level and

passed the reading on to the automatic control system, Van Vollenhoven said.

According to conversation recorded between the plane's captain, first officer and an extra first officer on the flight, the pilots noticed the faulty altimeter but didn't consider it a problem and didn't react, Van Vollenhoven said.

But the autopilot reduced gas to the engines and the plane lost speed, decelerating until, at a height of 450 feet (150 meters) it was about to stall. Warning systems alerted the pilots.

"It appears that then the pilots immediately gave gas, full gas, however it was too late to recover," Van Vollenhoven told reporters. He said it would be for courts to apportion blame. The plane fell into a freshly plowed field, striking the ground tail first and breaking into three pieces.

Eyewitnesses said it seemed to fall from the sky. Passengers who survived had noticed the pilot gunning the engines at the last minute. Some didn't realize the landing had gone wrong until other passengers began opening emergency doors. Those killed in the crash included five Turks and four Americans.

Turkish Airlines said the dead included the three pilots.



The head of the Dutch Safety Authority, Pieter van Vollenhoven, speaks during a press conference in The Hague, Netherlands, Wednesday, March 4, 2009. Investigators say a faulty altimeter played a role in a Turkish Airlines crash that killed 9 people in the Netherlands.

It described the captain, Hasan Tahsin Arisan, as an experienced pilot and air force veteran.

The company has said it will pay compensation to victims and survivors.

The American dead included three Boeing employees on a business trip unrelated to the flight.

As of Wednesday, 28 survivors are still hospitalized.

The investigation is expected to last until the end of the year. Van Vollenhoven said that from now on "the technical investigation will be directed at the functioning of the automatic pilot, the automatic gas control system, and their coupling to the radio

altimeter."

The Turkish pilot's association had earlier suggested the crash was due to "wake turbulence" from a large plane, a Boeing 757, that had landed at Schiphol Airport two minutes earlier.

Wake turbulence forms behind an aircraft as it passes through the air.

Boeing's 737 is the world's best-selling commercial jet, with more than 6,000 orders since the model was launched in 1965. The 737-800, a recent version of the plane, has a "very good safety record," said Bill Voss, president of the independent Flight Safety Foundation in Alexandria, Va. □

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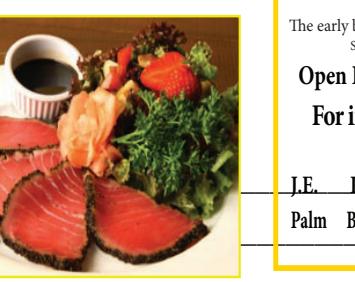
"Fishes and More" leads the way in seafood dining

PALM BEACH - Fishes and More Restaurant opened up in the Arawak Gardens just 3 and a half years ago and has been a great success since day one.

PALM BEACH - Fishes and More Restaurant opened up in the Arawak Gardens just 3 and a half years ago and has been a great success since day one. Word on the street is that once you eat at Fishes and More, consider yourself addicted. The owners Jeroen Kuling and Hans Heijink together with the staff Romalo, Heidi, Mariella, Denise and Chef Gerben work hard keeping the restaurant open 7 days a week from 4 pm till 11pm for everyone to enjoy. The ambiance at the restaurant is out of this world, whether dinnin inside in the relaxed air-conditioned



dining room or outside on the terrace to enjoy the tropical breeze and daily live music. Most guests come in early for the daily fresh catches, such as Red snapper, grouper, mahi mahi, wahoo and tuna. Check with the server to find out about the Catch of the day. The chef will be more than happy to prepare your fish the way you like it best: grilled, deep-fried, pan-fried or the chef's choice. Every Wednesday, seafood specials are prepared depending on what the fishermen bring in fresh out of the water that afternoon. These



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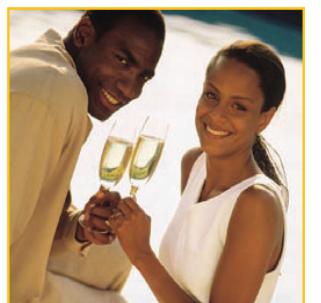
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SPORTS**Aruba TODAY****NBA Roundup****Sloppy Magic still beat Suns**

ORLANDO, Florida (AP) — The Orlando Magic overcame a season-high 24 turnovers to beat the Phoenix Suns 111-99 on Tuesday and tighten its grip on the NBA's Southeast Division.

Dwight Howard had 21 points and eight rebounds in a bruising battle with Shaquille O'Neal, as Orlando went ten points clear atop its division. The Magic has the league's fourth-best record overall.

O'Neal finished with 19 points and 11 rebounds, outmuscling his original team for most of the night before he lost his cool late, again drawing boos by the Orlando crowd. His technical foul with 3:38 left contributed to nine straight points for the Magic that gave them a 10-point lead to put the game out of reach.

Pistons 110, Nuggets 95
In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Detroit overcame a strong performance by former favorite to beat Denver.

Chauncey Billups scored a season-high 34 points in his return to the Palace, but the Pistons still beat a Nuggets team missing a suspended Carmelo Anthony.

The Pistons have won three straight for the first time in two months to move a game over .500 in a season that was stunted by a trade that sent Billups to Denver for Allen Iverson. Iverson missed his third straight game with a back injury.

The Nuggets suspended Anthony for the game after he refused to go to the bench when coach George Karl tried to take him out of their previous game.

Denver's lead in the Northwest Division has been sliced to just one game over Portland.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 31 points to lead Los Angeles over Memphis and avoid the Lakers' first three-game skid of the season.

Memphis, 3-24 on the road, kept it relatively close until the Lakers pulled away from a 54-51 lead early in the third

Super clash

Orlando Magic center Dwight Howard (12) tries to get off a shot but is fouled by Phoenix Suns center Shaquille O'Neal (32) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Orlando, Fla., Tuesday, March 3, 2009. Orlando won 111-99.

Associated Press

quarter.

In Houston, the hosts extended their home-court winning streak to 10 games by downing Toronto. Carl Landry matched a career high with 22 points, while Luis Scola added 20 points and 16 rebounds.

The Rockets moved a game ahead of New Orleans and Portland in the Western Conference standings.

The Raptors have lost seven of their past eight road games.

In Milwaukee, Jarvis Hayes hit a tie-breaking 3-pointer with 18 seconds left to lift New Jersey over Milwaukee.

Brook Lopez scored 24 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for the Nets, who moved within half a game of the Bucks in the race for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

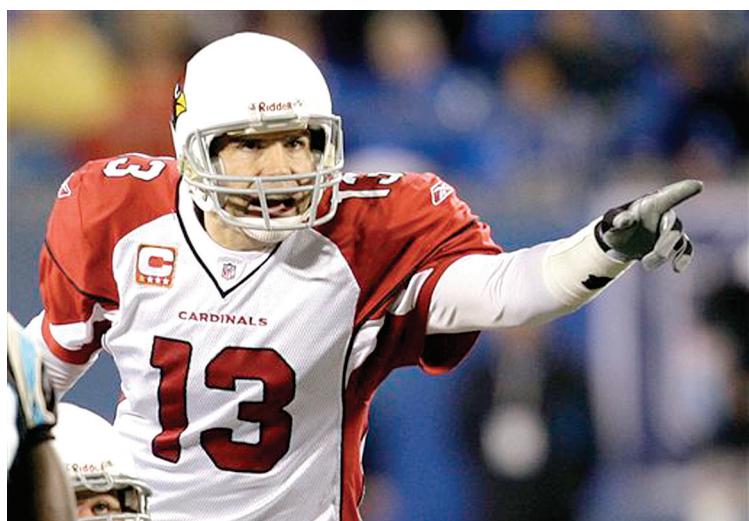
In Charlotte, North Carolina, Charlotte won a fourth straight

game for the first time this season, comfortably beating the Bulls.

Raymond Felton had 18 points and nine assists, and Raja Bell also scored 18 points for the Bobcats.

After winning the final three games on their West Coast trip, Charlotte returned home and continued their late-season push to reach the playoffs for the first time, securing the season tiebreaker over the Bulls, who are also in a logjam for the final postseason berth in the Eastern Conference.

In other NBA games it was, Golden State 118, Minnesota 94; Indiana 117, Sacramento 109; Charlotte 96, Chicago 80, New Jersey 99, Milwaukee 95; Houston 107, Toronto 97; Los Angeles Lakers 99, Memphis 89 and Pistons 110, Denver 95. □



In this Jan. 10, 2009 file photo, Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kurt Warner (13) directs his team during an NFL divisional playoff football game in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press

Agent: Warner, Arizona agree to two-year, \$23M deal

By BOB BAUM

AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Quarterback Kurt Warner agreed to stay with the Arizona Cardinals for a two-year, \$23 million contract on Wednesday.

The agent for 37-year-old Warner said the deal included a \$15 million signing bonus.

"We finally got it done," agent Mark Bartelstein told The Associated Press. "We're excited about that. I think it's good for everybody." Warner made a highly publicized visit to the San Francisco 49ers on Monday but had made it clear he wanted to remain in Arizona, where he was the catalyst of the Cardinals' improbable run to the Super Bowl. The Cardinals have an offense tailored to Warner's skills with two of the game's top wide receivers in Larry Fitzgerald and Anquan Boldin.

The deal came after Warner lowered his demands on Tuesday. Initially, he had sought to be among the top five paid quarterbacks in the NFL, about \$14.5 million a year. But on Tuesday, he told Bartelstein to offer Arizona a two-year, \$23 million deal. The Cardinals initially had offered two years and \$20 million.

Warner has been with the Cardinals for four seasons but had to win the starting job from Matt Leinart in training camp a year ago. He went on to have a Pro Bowl season that rivaled his league MVP days with the St. Louis Rams.

He started all 20 games for Arizona last season. In 16 regular-season games, Warner completed 67 percent of his throws for 4,583 yards and 30 touchdowns, with 14 interceptions.

In four playoff games, he was even better, completing 68 percent of his passes for 1,147 yards and 11 touchdowns, with three interceptions.

But for one extremely costly interception, he was brilliant in Arizona's 27-23 loss to Pittsburgh in the Super Bowl, completing 31 of 43 passes for 377 yards and three touchdowns.

Warner's return to the top was one of the best stories of last season, another chapter to his storybook career. His well-known tale includes stocking shelves in a supermarket, then working his way through the Arena Football League and NFL Europe to the St. Louis Rams, where he was thrust into the starting job after an injury to Trent Green. Warner led the Rams to two Super Bowls, winning one of them, in three years but lost his starting job and left as a free agent for the New York Giants, where he was displaced by rookie Eli Manning. Then it was off to Arizona, where Warner was an off-and-on starter before taking over last year in Ken Whisenhunt's second season as coach. □

AP source: Dodgers, Ramirez reach agreement

By BETH HARRIS

AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Manny Ramirez and the Los Angeles Dodgers reached a preliminary agreement on a \$45 million, two-year contract on Wednesday following months of talks.

The agreement was subject to the outfielder passing a physical, a person familiar with the talks said. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press because the deal was not final.

Ramirez gets \$25 million this year and has until November to decide whether to void the second season, which calls for a \$20 million salary. The deal includes a full no-trade provision.

The Dodgers were the only team to acknowledge pursuing

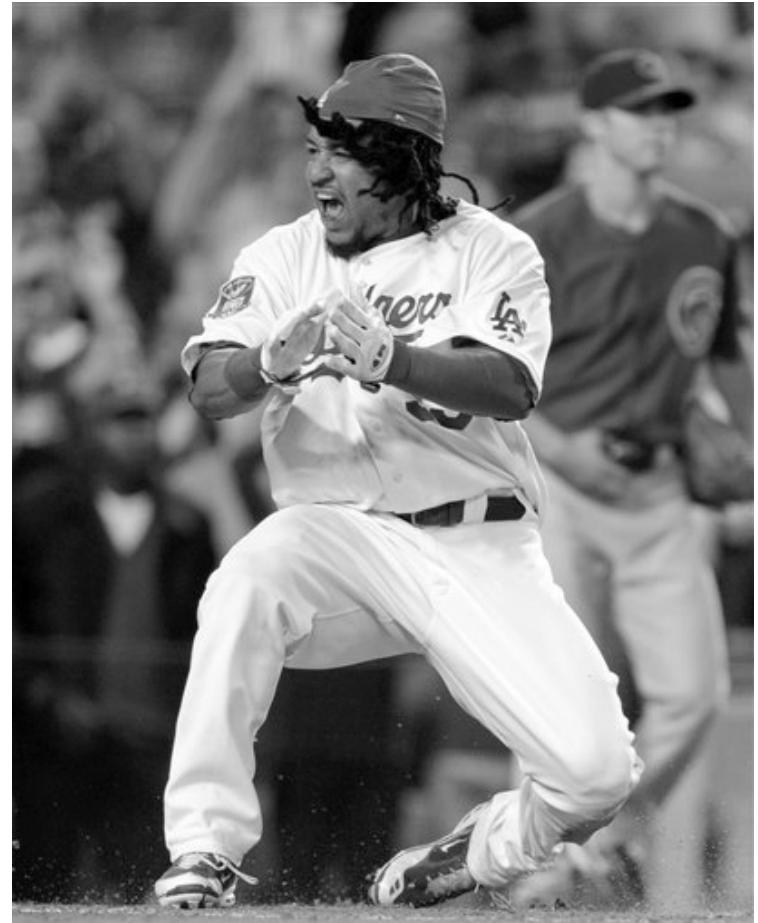
Ramirez, a 12-time Major League Baseball All-Star who turns 37 in May. Ramirez helped the Dodgers win the National League West by hitting .396 with 17 homers and 53 RBIs in 53 regular-season games. In the playoffs, he batted .520 with four homers, 10 RBIs, nine runs and 11 walks in eight games. Dodgers general manager Ned Colletti and manager Joe Torre left spring training in Arizona and met on Wednesday in the Los Angeles area with owner Frank McCourt, Ramirez and the player's agent, Scott Boras.

Los Angeles announced last week that Ramirez declined its latest offer, a \$25 million, one-year contract with a \$20 million player option for 2010. That deal would have included deferred payments of

\$10 million each in 2011 and 2012 and \$5 million in 2013. Boras countered with a proposal that included no deferred money, leaving the sides about \$3 million apart in present-day value.

At the time the Dodgers acquired him from the Boston Red Sox last July 31, Ramirez's contract was amended to eliminate the \$20 million team options it included for 2009 and 2010. The new agreement leaves him with a small increase but likely fell short of what Ramirez hoped to gain on the free-agent market.

Ramirez was MVP of the 2004 World Series — Boston's first championship since 1918 — and helped the Red Sox to another title in 2007. But he often failed to run hard to first base on grounders and repeatedly said he didn't want to play for Boston, which lured him from Cleveland after the 2000 season with a \$160 million, eight-year contract. □



In this Oct. 4, 2008, file photo Los Angeles Dodgers' Manny Ramirez reacts after sliding safely into home to score on a two-run double by James Loney during the first inning of Game 3 of baseball's National League division series against the Chicago Cubs in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

U.S. beats Denmark 2-0 in Algarve Cup

By DIRK HINRICHES

Associated Press Writer

LAGOS, Portugal (AP) — Tina DiMartino's first international goal helped the defending champion United States beat Denmark 2-0 in the Algarve Cup on Wednesday.

DiMartino, making her second international appearance, poked in the ball in the 35th minute after Natasha Kai's header rebounded off the post. Angie Woznuk scored first in the 22nd.

The U.S. beat Denmark in the invitation tournament's last two finals and has won the title six times in the past eight years.

Also in Group B, Iceland upset four-time Algarve champion Norway 3-1. Fara Bjor Gunnars scored twice and Edda Gardar added another for the Icelanders, while Kersten Lie scored for Norway.

Two-time world champion Germany went to the top of Group A by beating Finland 2-0 on goals from



United States players Natasha Kay, left, Shannon Boxx and Carli Lloyd, right, celebrate their second goal against Denmark during their Algarve Cup women's soccer match Wednesday, March 4, 2009, in Lagos, southern Portugal.

Associated Press

Naid Berringer and Kerstin Garefrekes. In the group's other match, two-time Algarve champion China drew 0-0 with Sweden.

The winners of each group will meet in the final on March 11. In Group C, featuring teams not competing for the title, Austria beat Wales 2-1 and Portugal was a 2-1 winner against Poland. □

Dominican WBC team counting on Rodriguez to return

By DAVID GINSBURG

AP Sports Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida (AP) — Even without Alex Rodriguez, the Dominican Republic probably has enough talent to win the World Baseball Classic.

Manager Felipe Alou hopes he doesn't have to test that theory.

On the day Rodriguez left the team to visit a hip specialist in Colorado, Alou reluctantly began planning for games without the New York Yankees slugger.

"As long as the spirit of this group is not affected, we can do what we want to with the guys we have here. But obviously, losing him would be a serious blow," Alou said Wednesday before his team played an exhibition against the Baltimore Orioles.

The Dominican Republic plays its WBC opener on Saturday

against the Netherlands.

Rodriguez had been slated as the starting third baseman, but Miguel Tejada took grounders at the position during batting practice and started at third against the Orioles.

"I'm going to take ground balls at shortstop and third base because I'm a soldier," Tejada said. "I'm taking orders from Felipe, and I'm here to do whatever I can do to help this team win."

Alou can fill A-Rod's position in the field, but it would be tough for anyone to replace his potent bat.

"It's not same lineup if you lose a big RBI guy like that,"

Alou said. "Right now we are a running team. We showed it yesterday in the first game. We hit a ball out of the ballpark, but it was by one of the (Florida) Marlins players we borrowed from them."

The strongest bat figures to



Dominican Republic's Alex Rodriguez laughs as he warms up at practice for the World Baseball Classic, Monday, March 2, 2009, at the St. Louis Cardinals' spring training facility in Jupiter, Fla.

Associated Press

belong to David Ortiz, who would love to have Rodriguez to provide some help.

"We definitely need him," Ortiz said. "Hopefully, everything is all right with him."

That was the prevailing sentiment of the rest of the team and its manager.

"We've got to wait until somebody says, 'Listen, don't count on that guy,'" Alou said. "Hopefully, the news is good or not too bad." □

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Philadelphia Flyers right wing Mike Knuble, left, celebrates his goal with Simon Gagne (12), who got an assist, during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the Boston Bruins in Boston on Tuesday, March 3, 2009. The Flyers won 4-2.

Associated Press

NHL Roundup**Gagne, Knuble lead Flyers past East-leading Bruins**

By JIMMY GOLEN

AP Sports Writer

BOSTON – Boston Bruins coach Claude Julien prefers to look at his team as the one that holds the best record in the Eastern Conference, not the one that's lost eight of 11 games heading into the NHL trading deadline.

"My job is to coach the players that I have," Julien said Tuesday night after the Flyers scored four straight goals to beat Boston 4-2. "I've had this team all year, we're in first place, so I think we're capable of doing a good job. If we get some help, so be it."

The trading deadline is 3 p.m. EST Wednesday, and the Bruins have been actively involved in talks for reinforcements.

Simon Gagne had two goals and an assist and Mike Knuble had a goal and two assists for the Flyers, who have won six of their last nine games to solidify their hold on fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

"We're in a playoff spot now, and what we do is going to affect where we go," Flyers coach John Stevens said. "I think our focus right now has to be on us."

Antero Niittymaki stopped 22 shots and Scottie Upshall also scored as the Flyers played their second game since the return of Danny Briere, who missed the previous 36 games with a groin and stomach injury.

Patrice Bergeron and Stephane Yelle scored for Boston and Manny Fernandez made 22 saves.

At Toronto, Johnny Oduya scored 4:48 into overtime and Martin Brodeur stopped 30 shots to move within four wins of breaking Patrick Roy's NHL mark of 551.

David Clarkson and Patrik Elias scored in regulation for New Jersey. John Mitchell scored twice for the Maple Leafs.

Red Wings 5, Blues 0

At St. Louis, Detroit overcame an early injury to star forward Marian Hossa in Chris Osgood's first shutout of the season.

Hossa, the Red Wings' leading scorer with 34 goals and 61 points, was hospitalized for observation after slamming headfirst into the boards early in the first period.

Tomas Kopecky, Henrik Zetterberg, Kris Draper, Niklas Kronwall and Valtteri Filppula scored and Osgood stopped 22 shots for his 299th win with the Red Wings, who have won three of four.

Panthers 4, Thrashers 3

At Atlanta, rookie Michael Frolik scored twice, Stephen Weiss had three assists and Florida moved into fifth place in the East.

Cory Stillman and Richard Zednik also scored for the Panthers.

In other NHL games it was, Dallas 4, San Jose 1; Vancouver 4, Minnesota 2; Chicago 3, Anaheim 2 in OT; Calgary 6, Ottawa 3; Columbus 5, Los Angeles 4; Pittsburgh 3 Tampa Bay 1; Nashville 6, Edmonton 5 in OT; Carolina 5, Washington 2; Florida 4, Atlanta 3; Detroit 5, St. Louis 0; New Jersey 3, Toronto 2 in OT □

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Venezuela:

EEUU actúa con hipocresía en combate a drogas

CARACAS (AP) - El gobierno de Estados Unidos actúa con una "hipocresía total" en el combate al narcotráfico y no tiene "moral" para señalar a otros países de no colaborar en esa materia, afirmó el miércoles el vicepresidente Ramón Carrizalez.

"Es una hipocresía total la que encontramos en ese gobierno (de Estados Unidos) porque si de drogas vamos hablar, (los estadounidenses) son el primer consumidor, son el primer importador de la droga que se produce en Colombia y que se produce en Asia, pero a la vez son los principales productores de marihuana", dijo Carrizalez.

En un acto en el Ministerio de la Defensa, donde asumió ese despacho de forma temporal, el vicepresidente indicó que "Estados Unidos de manera descarada y de manera cínica nos acusa de no colaborar en la lucha contra el tráfico de droga porque no permitimos que la DEA actúe abiertamente en nuestro país violando nuestra soberanía".

Carrizalez hizo la declaración en alusión al informe que emitió la semana pasada el Departamento de Estado que señaló que el gobierno del presidente Hugo Chávez "se negó a cooperar

en casi todos los temas bilaterales del narcotráfico, rechazando las críticas estadounidenses y acusando al gobierno de ser cómplice de las organizaciones del narcotráfico".

"Quíntense la careta, combatan dentro de su país el consumo, combatan dentro de su país el cultivo, la producción de droga, y entonces tendrán moral, y tendrán credibilidad cuando acusen a otros países que son víctimas de todo este problema", agregó Carrizalez.

Chávez fustigó el pasado fin de semana el informe del Departamento de Estado correspondiente al 2008, y dijo que Estados Unidos "es el país que más apoya el narcotráfico en este planeta. Es Estados Unidos el primer consumidor de drogas del mundo".

Las acciones conjuntas entre Venezuela y Estados Unidos para combatir el narcotráfico terminaron en el 2005, cuando Chávez suspendió la cooperación

con la agencia antidrogas estadounidense, la DEA, alegando que sus agentes incurrieron en actividades de espionaje. Dos miembros de la DEA continúan en el país, pero funcionarios estadounidenses dicen que su trabajo se ha visto muy limitado.

El documento del Departamento de Estado indica que el narcotráfico en Venezuela se incrementó cinco veces desde el 2002, respecto de las 50 toneladas métricas de entonces, a 250 en el 2007, según estimaciones, y que los carteles han aprovechado "su geografía, corrupción y un débil sistema judicial, las incompetentes y en algunos casos cómplices fuerzas de seguridad, además de la falta de cooperación a nivel internacional contra el narcotráfico".

El informe fue preparado durante el gobierno del ex presidente George W. Bush, pero fue firmado por la administración de Barack Obama. □



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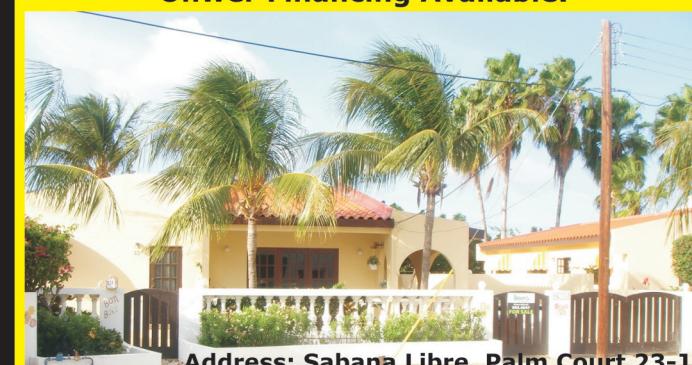
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